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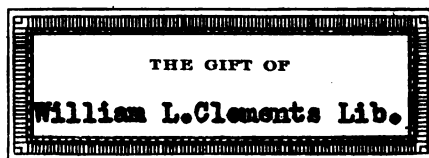
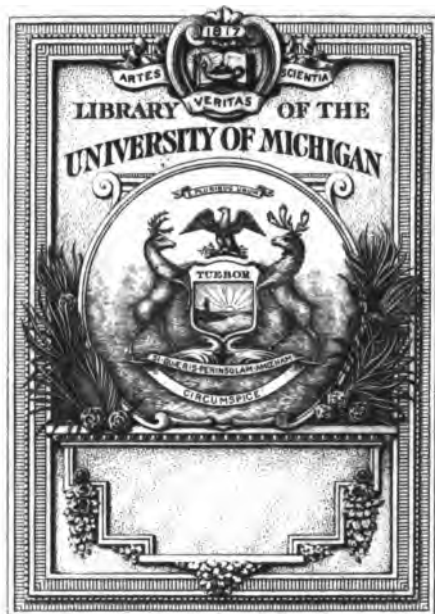
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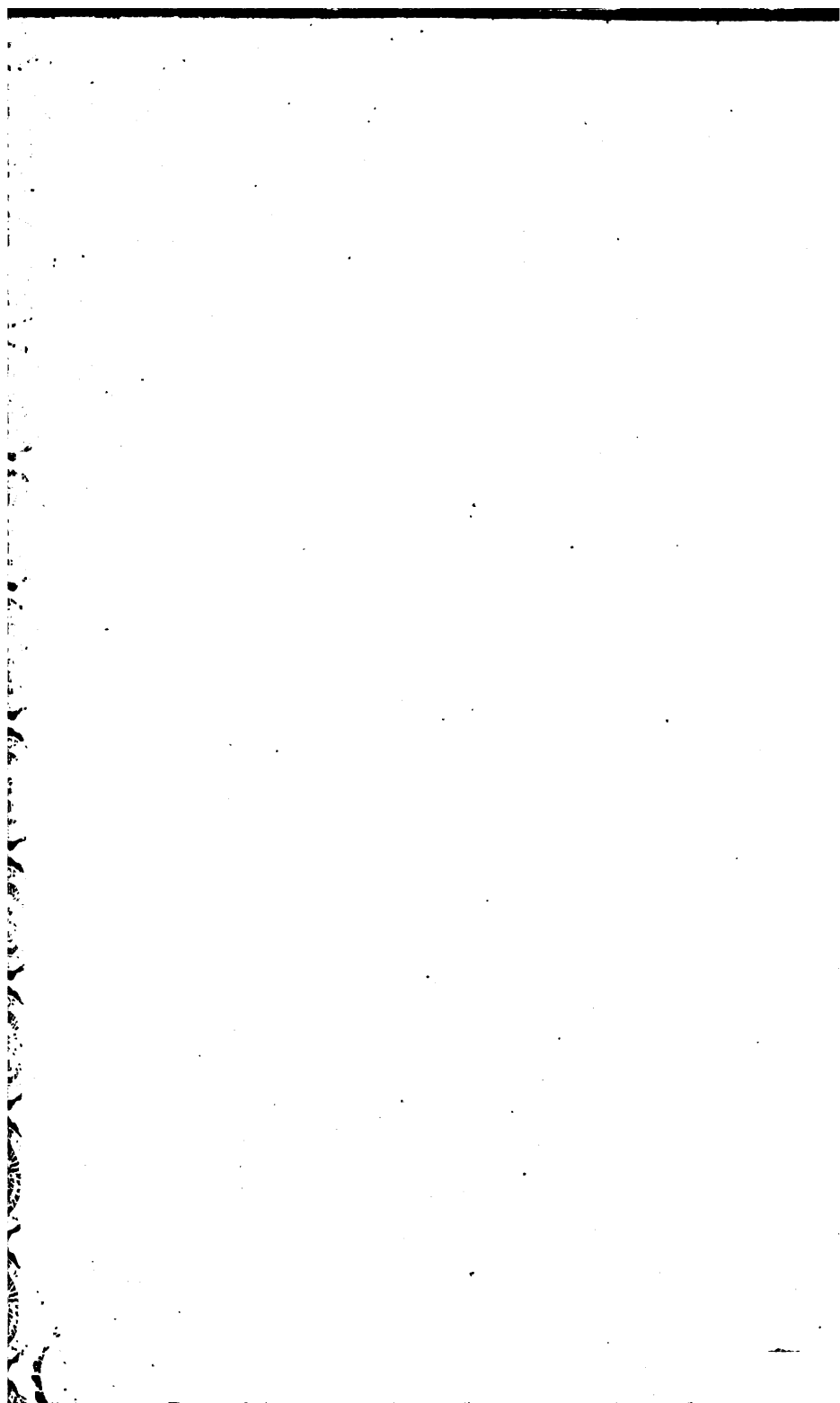
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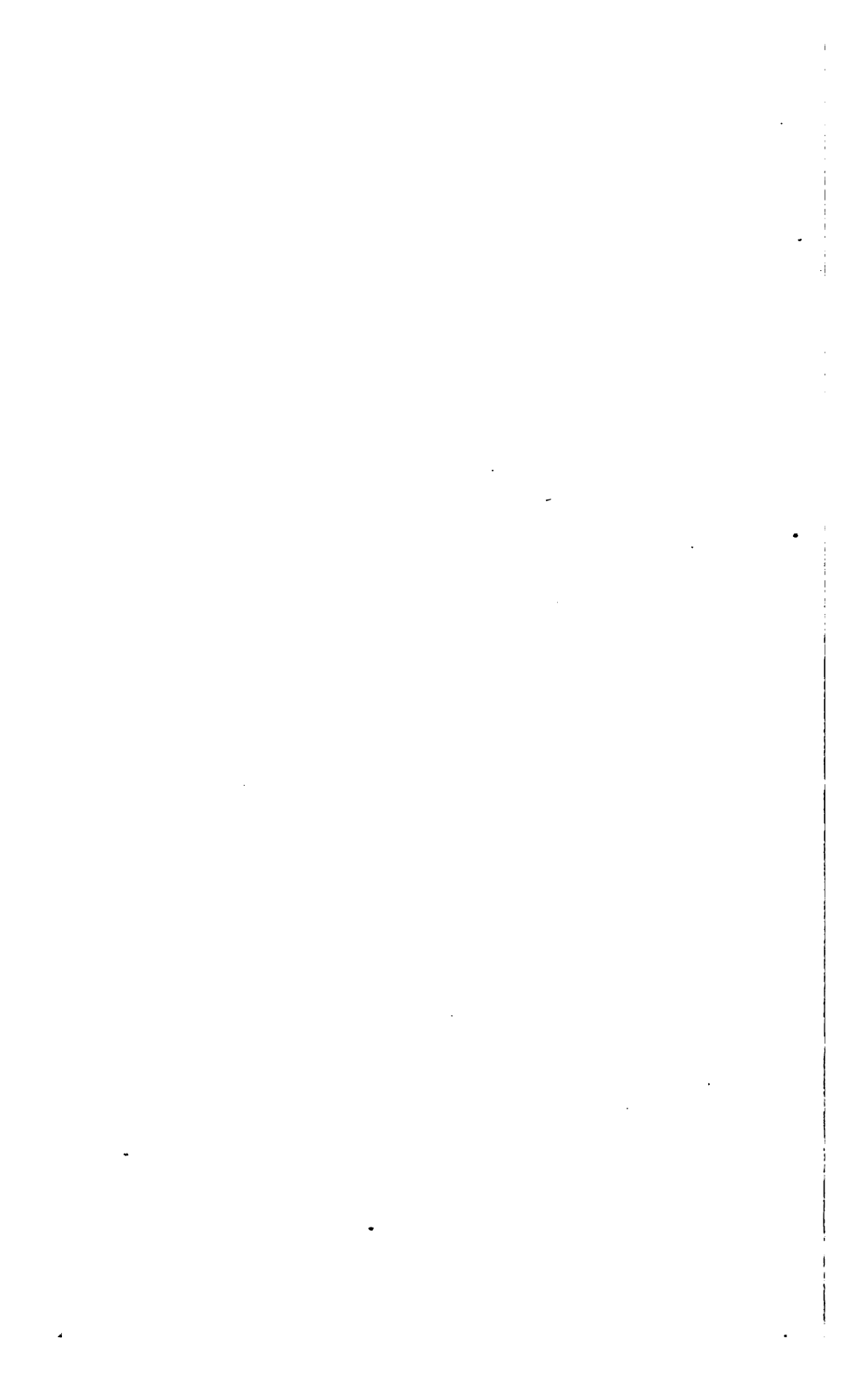
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8 *The CHRISTIAN'S Triumph over Death.*

A
S E R M O N

Occasioned by the much-lamented

D E A T H

Of the R E V E R E N D

PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D.D.

And M I N I S T E R of the G O S P E L at
N O R T H A M P T O N.

Who died O C T O B E R 26, 1751. in the
Fiftieth Year of his Age.

By *J O B O R T O N.*

L O N D O N:

Printed and Sold by J. WAUGH at the *Turk's-Head* in
Lombard-street, Mr. TOZER at *Exeter*, Mr. HOTHAM
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M D C C L I I.

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*Left
Williams L. Clements Library
10-20-1929* To the

Church of CHRIST at *Northampton*,

lately under the pastoral Care of the

Reverend Dr. DODDRIDGE ;

Grace, Mercy, and Peace from God
our Father, and from the Lord
JESUS CHRIST.

My DEAR FRIENDS,

THOUGH providence has removed me to a distance from you, I share largely in those sorrows, with which your minds are filled on account of the death of your learned, pious, and excellent Pastor ; an event which all our Churches greatly and justly lament. When he assigned to me the work of preaching the sermon on that occasion, he was sensible my respect for *you*, as well as for *him*, would not suffer me to decline it. In compliance

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mms

with his desire the following discourse, was drawn up, in the best manner I could, amidst the languors of an infirm constitution, and the interruption of many necessary avocations. And it had been long ago preached among you, had not a wise providence permitted an unhappy accident to befall me, which confines me at home. It is the most grievous circumstance in this affliction, that I am prevented from visiting you, performing the service assigned by my ever-honoured friend and father, and personally suggesting to you such consolations and advices as may, in present circumstances, be peculiarly useful. To supply this lack of service, I am *constrained* to send you the discourse from the press: and this, I hope, will be a sufficient apology with those, who may think it unworthy of public regard. It is some satisfaction to me to reflect, that discourses, on such solemn occasions, have been attended with great
useful-

DEDICATION.

usefulness, especially to the acquaintance and friends of the deceased, which has often flowed, not so much from the thoughts and advices contained in them considered alone, as viewed in connection with the awful events which occasioned them. I hope, therefore, that a recollection of the *Doctor's* eminent worth, and the loss his family, his flock, and the public sustain by his death, will cast a veil over the imperfections of this discourse, and fill every reader's heart with so much *seriousness* and *tenderness*, as may make way, for the plain remarks and admonitions contained therein, to impress it, and through the influences of the Spirit of *Jesus*, produce some valuable effect.

I cannot conclude this address without expressing my warmest gratitude to you, for all the respect and affection with which you honoured me, during the agreeable years I spent amongst you. And it is my earnest wish and prayer, that you may yet flourish,

DEDICATION.

flourish, and be edified, *walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comforts of the holy Ghost*: particularly that you may act upon those noble and truly christian maxims of *candor* and *unanimity*, which your late Pastor inculcated upon you, and the public, in all your future conduct, and especially in the choice of his successor; that the Head of the Church would give you a *pastor after his own heart*, under whom you may daily grow in christian knowledge and holiness, and be training up for the perfection and happiness of the heavenly state. These are the daily prayers of,

My dear FRIENDS,

Your very affectionate Friend,

and Servant, for JESUS sake,

JOB ORTON.

I COR. XV. 54. latter part.

—*Death is swallowed up in Victory.*

THE dying bed of an eminent Christian is a most melancholy, and at the same time a most delightful scene: *grief* for the dominion of sin and death, and the loss we are sustaining by his removal, *joy* in the supports of religion he feels, and the promises of the gospel he rests upon, take place in our minds by turns, and sometimes mingle together. But in a soul formed to a relish for virtuous friendship, and deeply impressed with the great truths of Christianity, the *joy* will preponderate; and the pious heart will overflow with sacred delight to see the terrors of death removed, to observe how wonderfully God sustains his servants in their last conflict, and what an attestation they give to the fulness and sweetness of *Christian* consolations. In this instance in particular, God graciously makes his providence a commentary upon his word, and illustrates the promises of his gospel by the

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the joy and peace he diffuses into the hearts of his dying saints. Our *text* has often been the means of producing this joy, and is indeed one of the most comfortable declarations, that mortal creatures can hear; and the *awful* event, which directs my thoughts to it confirms the excellency and suitableness of it. It should, certainly, be regarded by *all* with an attention becoming dying creatures. But there are two circumstances, (my Friends) to recommend it to *your* peculiar regard, *viz.* that it was exemplified in the closing scenes of the life of your late worthy *Pastor*, so justly dear to you and to me, and that, out of a particular concern for your support and encouragement living and dying, it was his express, his last, and almost dying request, that I would discourse to you from it, on this very melancholy occasion.

* *Whitby*
in loc.

The excellent and reviving chapter of which the text is a part, was intended to confute the opinion of those who said, *there was no resurrection of the dead* *. Their error seems to have been in asserting, that what Christ and his apostles had said of a resurrection, did not refer to a resurrection of the dead, but a resurrection or renovation to a life of holiness from a state of sin, which is justly

justly and beautifully described as a state of death. This, probably, was the error of *Hymeneus* and *Philetus*, who said, that *the resurrection is past already*. The apostle *Paul* therefore sets himself to prove at large, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead. He proves it *possible*, from the resurrection of *Christ*; a well known and undisputed fact. He proves it *certain*, from the connection between this fact, and the authority of the apostles to publish his religion; of which this doctrine was so distinguishing and glorious a part; and also from the relation, in which *Christ*, the last *Adam* stood to mankind. And as the objections against this doctrine chiefly arose from not understanding its nature, and the circumstances of the new body, he enlarges upon these topicks in the latter part of the chapter; and concludes it with a divine and most eloquent rapture, describing the glorious resurrection of the saints (of whom alone he there speaks) and triumphing in the prospect of this blissful event; so (says he) *when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in Victory."* The text is a quotation from the prophecies of

2 Tim. ii.
18.

B

Isaiab,

Ifai. 25. 8. *Isaiah*, where it is said, *He will swallow up death in victory*; and probably refers to the deliverance of the *Israelites* from that utter destruction, which the king of *Assyria* threatened, and attempted to bring upon them: a deliverance that was indeed life from the dead. It is with great propriety and beauty, that these sublime and comfortable words are by *St. Paul* accommodated to the resurrection of the dead. The text suggests to us these two remarks, which I will endeavour to illustrate, and then direct you to the proper improvement of them.

I. Death may naturally be considered as an enemy.

II. True Christians shall obtain a complete victory over it.

I. *Death may naturally be considered as an enemy.*

This is implied in the text, when the apostle speaks of *a victory*; and it is expressly asserted in verse 26. *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.* It is an enemy we are every one to conflict with, for *there is no discharge in that war.* Death is, by an elegant figure, often described in the scriptures, as a person, or intelligent agent. It is emphati-

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II

phatically styled *the king of terrors*, and said *to reign over mankind by one man's offence*. Nature and experience teach us to consider death as an enemy; for

Job xviii.

^{14.}
Rom. 5.

^{17.}

It dissolves the union between soul and body.

It dislodges the soul, willing or unwilling; and separates it from its old and dear companion. Providence has wisely implanted in every human mind a love to the body to which it is united and a tender concern for its health; inasmuch that, *no man ever yet*

Eph. 5. 29.

hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it. Consequently a separation must

be painful. Though good men while *in this tabernacle*, (this mean precarious building) *groan being burdened*, yet there is a natural aversion to put it off. *Not* (says the

² Cor. v.
^{4.}

apostle) *for that we would be unclothed*. It would be more agreeable to take the body with us to another world, than go through the pain and terror of dying and have these two bosom friends divorced. This is a circumstance we would be glad to be excused from, especially as it is the consequence and punishment of sin; but death will pull down this structure, which, mean as it is, we are fond of, Having dwelt in it so long and having been at so much care and pains to keep it

in tolerable repair, and will force the inhabitant to remove.

Again, *death destroys the activity and beauty of the body, and turns it into loathsomeness and corruption.* Diseases, its forerunners, generally consume away the flesh that it cannot be seen, and the bones that were not seen, stick out. At length the comeliness of the body is turned into deformity, and what was an object of delight, becomes a spectacle of horror. The limbs that were sprightly and active, grow stiff and useless: The eyes which sparkled with life and vigor, are sunk and ghastly: The learned brain, in which so many curious traces were lodged, so many ideas ranged with the utmost care and retained by close recollection, has lost its exquisite sensibility; and the entertaining and instructive tongue is sealed up in silence. The vitals of the body have lost their powers. The lungs cease to play, and the heart to beat. *The silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl broken, the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern.* Then we are willing to bury our dead out of our sight; to cast the desire of our eyes into the grave, to mingle with common dust, and lie in dishonour and darkness for ages to come.

Job xxxiii.
21.

Ecc. xii.
6.

Further,

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13

Further, *Death removes us from our most near and intimate friends, and other earthly comforts.*

It dissolves the ties of nature, and the alliances of friendship; and breaks down the pleasing fabrick of happiness, which love had been for many years erecting. The benevolent heart is ready to take up *Hezekiah's* mournful complaint, *I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.*

Isaiah
xxxviii.
11.

Further, *it breaks off men's thoughts and purposes relating to this world*, for the good of their families, neighbourhood, and the publick. The great thoughts of wise and pious men for the glory of God and the advancement of religion perish; and the charitable schemes, which depended on the continuance of their lives, are defeated.

Finally, *The little acquaintance we have with the other world, to which death transmits us, increases the fear of a removal hence.*

We know so little of our souls and their manner of existence and operation without a body, and there are so many doubts and fears about their eternal condition prevailing in us, that it is no wonder, the thought of quitting the present scene is painful, and death, as it removes us from it, is considered as an enemy.

Whose

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Whose heart is not ready to fail him in the prospect? Who does not find his reason and sometimes his faith too, ready to sink, when he is going to encounter the *king of terrors*, and pass through his dark and gloomy regions to an unknown and unalterable state? And in vain we call to reason, and ask philosophy to furnish us with sufficient armour of defence, and to fortify our minds against the attacks of this stern invader. It is the *peculiar* glory of the gospel of *Christ* to assist our reason, and increase our faith in proportion to the strength of the enemy, and the different impressions which the apprehensions of it make upon our minds. And this it does by the discovery it makes of a future state, a glorious resurrection, and a final everlasting triumph over death.

Having thus briefly viewed the frightful features of the enemy, let us turn our eyes to a more bright and agreeable scene; and observe

II. *True Christians shall obtain a complete victory over death.*

The text informs us that a victory shall be gained, and it shall be so complete, that death may be said to be even *swallowed up* in

in it, quite destroyed, and no traces or remainders of it be found. This is confirmed by the passage already mentioned; verse 26. *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.* The word (*καταργησαι*) rendered *destroyed*, signifies being divested of an authority it had before, and being reduced to an incapacity of exerting any further power †. Thus after the same apostle had been speaking of *persecution, peril, and sword, of being killed all the day-long*, as the lot of himself and his fellow-christians, he adds, *may in all these things we are more than conquerors*, compleat, glorious, triumphant conquerors—And this is agreeable to what GOD himself declares concerning this formidable enemy, with so much grandeur and majesty. *I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from my eyes.*

Rom. viii.

37.

Hof. xiii.

14.

For the further illustration of this comfortable truth, let us observe, that *the victory is in some measure obtained in the present life—but it shall be perfected in the future.*

1. The victory is in some measure obtained even in the present life.

Christ

† Compare verse 24. where the same word is rendered *put down*.

2 Tim. i.
10. compared with
Rom. iii.

3. 31.
1 Cor. i.
28. xiii. 8.
Eph. ii.

15.
Heb. ii. 14.

Christ gained a victory by his own resurrection, and the revelation and promise of a happiness beyond the grave; for *he hath abolished death*, (abolished its tyranny, destroyed its force, and rendered it, comparatively, of none effect,) and *hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*. He has assured us of the certainty and eternity of the future state, and largely explained its nature. — He has not indeed removed the *natural* fears of death which are wrought into our very constitution, and are the springs of many of our actions; nor is it his intention entirely to remove from the minds of good men that fear of death, which has an apparent tendency to promote seriousness and watchfulness, an heavenly disposition which keeps them always prepared for the coming of the Lord. But he has taken away the *slavish* apprehensions of it, and delivered them, who, *through fear of death, were all their life long subject to bondage*. Death has now, in effect, changed its nature. It only hurts the body, not the soul. It only puts an end to those pursuits, employments, and entertainments, which are suited to the body, and this present world; but not to those, about which holy souls are engaged, and with which they are delighted and

and improved. Nay, it is become, on many accounts, a benefit; as it puts an end to their temptations and conflicts, doubts and fears; as it *bides their bodies in the grave*, for ever shelters them from the pains and sorrows to which they are here exposed, and transports their separate spirits to everlasting purity and peace.

A present victory is obtained by the *calmness* with which the saints die; and that *joy unspeakable, and full of glory*, with which the Spirit of *Christ* sometimes replenishes their hearts, when the flesh is sinking into the dust.—Are they not conquerors, when, with smiles in their pale countenances, and songs of praise upon their quivering lips, they calmly yield to the stroke of death, and, through *Christ* who strengtheneth them, triumph over all its frightful powers, saying, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* Let me add, this is death's *last* attack. It strikes once, but can never strike more; and “all the hurt it can possibly do them, is to put it absolutely out of his own power ever to hurt them any more *.” which leads me to add further.

*Mr. Howe

2. *The victory shall be perfected in the future world.*

C

And

And this will appear, when we consider, that all the faithful servants of *Christ* shall be raised again; their bodies shall be transformed into the likeness of *Christ's* body; and they shall be fixed in a state of compleat and everlasting happiness.

1. *All the faithful servants of Christ shall be raised again.*

They are laid in the grave, but not *one* of them shall be lost there. *Death feeds on them*, but at the great day they shall have the *dominion*. That there shall be a resurrection of the dead, that their bodies, which are turned to corruption, shall be redeemed, and so much of each, as shall be sufficient to denominate it their *own* body, collected and united by the almighty power of God, is certainly declared in the holy scriptures. We have some intimations of this in the *old* testament, upon which the *Jews* grounded their belief, that there should be a *resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust*. But it is plainly revealed in the *new*.

Acts xxiv.

15.

John v.

28.

vi. 40.

The hour is coming when all, that are in their graves, shall hear the voice of Christ, and come forth. This (says he) is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

day. This doctrine the apostles preached; they assured the Christians, that he *who raised up Christ from the dead, should quicken their mortal bodies. That Christ was risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept*; of that plentiful harvest which should spring out of the dust, when the Lord should descend again from heaven. The resurrection of *Christ*, illustrated by the resurrection of other dead bodies, proves what God *can* do, and testifies what he *will* do. And this chapter alone, will keep up the belief of this great event, till the trumpet shall sound, and the resurrection prove itself. *Captivity shall be led captive, and death, which has triumphed over the whole human race, shall himself be triumphed over, when the earth and the sea shall give up their dead.* Though we now say to corruption, *thou art my father, and to the devouring worm, thou art my mother and my sister*: The authority and power of *Christ* shall at length dissolve the disagreeable relation, and the grave claim no more acquaintance with us. But, as a bare resurrection is common to good and bad; and since, as in *Adam* all die, even so in *Christ* shall all be made alive; therefore we must add,

Rom. viii.
11. and
1 Cor. xv.
20.

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2. *Their bodies shall be transformed into the image of Christ's body.*

Phil. iii.
21.

This is their peculiar honour; and the apostle *Paul* asserts it in very strong terms; *who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.* The doctrine of the resurrection was ridiculed by the weaker heathens as impossible, and represented by the wiser as undesirable; turning the soul again into a prison, and laying upon it an insupportable burden: But the account the apostle gives us in this chapter, of the great alteration which shall be made in the bodies of the saints, answers their objections. He assures us, that *weakness, corruption, and dishonour* shall be left in the grave; and *the body be raised in incorruption, glory, and power; a spiritual body, not an animal one.* And *as we have born the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.* The body shall be quite refined from gross matter, be more active and sprightly, and more easily moved from place to place, than it now is, in its utmost flow of health and spirits. It shall have no gross organs to obscure the faculties of the soul, or clog its operations. It shall need no such
sup-

supports as it now does, nor feel any of those appetites, which are often temptations to sin, and which, without resolute government, injure the health, and prevent the serviceableness of the body, as well as interrupt the tranquility and peace of the mind. It shall have no corrupt blood, or sour juices to occasion irregular ferments, to excite the angry passions, or produce a melancholy, or a fretful disposition. There will be no *law in the members warring against the law of the mind*, and bringing it into *captivity*. It will exert itself with the utmost vigor in God's service, without being *wearied* with it, or *worn out* by it. *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.* The place, the company, the work of heaven, will all tend to increase their lustre and activity. If *Moses's* converse with God for a few days left such a brightness on his countenance, that the *Israelites* could not bear to behold it, it is very natural to infer, that dwelling in the presence of God, the fountain of light, beholding the glory of *Christ* for years and ages, will improve the splendor of pure, spiritual, incorruptible Bodies. And, it is probable, a covering of effulgent glory will be thrown over them, as there was over *Christ's* body when

Matt. xvii.

2.

when he was transfigured, *and his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light*; and make them *shine as the brightness of the firmament*. And the more they resemble *Christ* in moral excellency, the more will their spiritual bodies resemble his, and the more illustrious be this mark of distinction and dignity. — But what is the precise nature of these bodies; how they will move and act; whether new organs will be added, or the present altered; in what manner the soul will act, and be influenced by them; are questions which we cannot solve, while we dwell in *houses of clay*. It is sufficient for us to know, that every thing, which was an imperfection, or a mark of the divine displeasure against sin, shall be entirely removed; that the body shall be so changed and new-moulded, as to be every way suited to assist the holy and happy spirit to which it is reunited, in the noblest services and enjoyments. Thus when *Christ appears*, every saint shall *awake in his likeness*, and *appear with him in glory*. What a noble triumph over death will *this* be, when every captive shall be released, and every one clothed with the robes of glory? Especially when we consider;

3. *They*

3. *They shall be fixed in a state of complete and everlasting happiness.*

Of this also the scriptures of truth assure us: *They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, cannot die any more; for they are like the angels. Mortality (or that which is mortal) shall be swallowed up of life, and no traces of it left. It is a very considerable part of the glory of the heavenly world, that there shall be no more death. Some noted commentators * would interpret the words, here rendered in victory, for ever, as denoting the utter destruction of death. The idea is plainly suggested in the phrase, swallowed up; and this truth is confirmed by the passages already mentioned, and many more in the scriptures, that not one true christian shall be liable to the attack of death any more.*

Luke xx.
35, 36.
Matt. xxii.
30.

2 Cor. v.
4

Rev. xxi.
4.
• Vid.
Grot. &
Whitby in
loc.

There shall be no fear of death remaining. A conquered enemy may recover his strength, assault us again, and prevail, at least so far as to alarm and terrify us; but death is *swallowed up*, and has no more power to overcome, or disturb the exalted, glorified servants of Christ for ever; not so much as *one of the barbingers, or attendants of death*, shall ever incommode them. There is no fear of the return of acute pains, or pining sickness;

Num. xvi.
32.

Lam. iii.
19.

sickness; which are often so grievous, as to dispose the heart to *long for death*, as a relief, and be *glad to find the grave*. Their bodies are not *varnished* over with an outward lustre, but perfectly free from all *principles of decay*. They are not only secure from *external violence*, but full of unfading, immortal *vigor*. Death has no power to take away, to molest, or even alarm any *one* of their friends and associates in that better country; but *because Christ lives, they shall also live*, and their duration be equal to his. — Finally, *There shall be no painful remembrance of Death*. A recollection of violent pains and cutting sorrows often gives uneasiness: When (as *Jeremiah* expresseth it, concerning his own misery) *the soul hath the wormwood and gall still in remembrance*, it embitters present enjoyments. But the remembrance of death shall not be terrifying, but agreeable. A comparison of the *present* with the *former* state, will only tend to enhance their pleasure; to excite high admiration of that power, which produced the surprising change, and give peculiar ardor to their adorations of that grace which prepared them for it. — In short, the *Lord of life* shall so entirely change the scene, that *all remainders of death shall be done away*, and nothing shall appear. by which

which it might be known, that it ever had the *least* dominion over any of his faithful servants. I shall sum up all in the striking words of the apostle; *It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* It doth not yet appear what we shall be! No, not yet, what we shall be *then*: for although our understanding is the distinction of our nature, and our tongue the glory of our frame, the one is overwhelmed when it labours to comprehend, and the other forced into silence when it attempts to describe, the objects and glories of immortality. And therefore, without presuming to take in the full meaning of the following words — *But we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is,* — We may venture to conclude, that we shall hereafter be blessed with an immediate, permanent, and influential vision of the Lord of life and glory; and such a vision, attended with vital beams surrounding us on every side, transfusing themselves through our whole frame, invigorating the divine life in us, and maintaining and increasing our sensible and intellectual joys, must import compleat and everlasting happiness.

1 John iii.
2.

D

Having

The Christian's Triumph over Death.

Having thus illustrated the remarks founded on the text, I am now to direct you to the proper improvement of so noble and interesting a subject. Let me then entreat your attention to the following

R E F L E C T I O N S.

i. *Let us contemplate the power and grace of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, so illustriously displayed in this triumph over death.*

It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to appoint his Son the captain of their salvation, and to consecrate him to that office through sufferings. He took part of flesh and blood, that he might be capable of dying, and, though death destroy him (or weaken, and render ineffectual his influence) that had the power of death, that is, the devil; who, by his temptations, brought sin and death into the world. He died to vanquish the terrors of death, and reconcile our minds to the thoughts and approaches of it. To this work he was set apart by his Father and God; and he alone was fit for the work, and worthy the honour of overcoming the king of terrors. And because, for this end, he became obedient to death, even the death of

Heb. ii.
19, 14.

of the cross, G O D has highly exalted him, constituted him LORD both of the dead and the living, lodged the keys of death, and the invisible world, in his hands, and given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to all his sincere and genuine disciples. He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet, and death, the chief and last of them, be destroyed. — These (brethren and fellow-christians) are the reviving truths of our holy religion: let us then rejoice in CHRIST JESUS, and glory in our relation to him, who, by his atoning sacrifice, took away the sting of death, which is sin, bore in his own body, the penalty denounced against transgressors, and by the influences of his Spirit, promotes a holy temper and conversation, which is the only proper qualification for a blessed and joyful resurrection. We are directed to consider him as *the resurrection and the life*, who is to come in power and glory to judge the world, the lustre of whose appearance shall penetrate to the deepest grave, and whose voice shall awaken every sleeping faint. — Then shall they come forth to join their glorified head and Saviour, to attend and grace the solemnity of that day, which shall compleat his conquest over death, and ter-

The Christian's Triumph over Death.

minate his mediatorial kingdom.—Since then *we are more than conquerors through him that loved us*, let this encrease our veneration for his gospel, which contains the record of eternal life; and with an eye of gratitude, love, and humble dependence, let us *look to Jesus the Lord of life*, who, *for the joy that was set before him*, of being himself highly exalted, and leading on all his good soldiers to conquest and to crowns, overcame the sharpness of death, and *is now set down at the right hand of God*. Let him be *precious to our souls*, who is the purchaser and *author of eternal salvation*.

2. *Let us reflect on the difference between good and bad men with regard to the consequences of death.*

Dan. xii.
2.

John v.
29.

This conqueror hath dominion over all: nevertheless all shall rise again. But oh! with what different appearances, and to what different states! *Some shall awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt*. All shall come forth of their graves, but with this lawful distinction, *they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*. With what horror and surprize will the wicked lift up their heads in that tremendous day, and how glad

glad will they be to sink back to rottenness, or even to *nothing*, from the *wrath of the lamb* ! but they *must* come forth, although their bodies should be so changed, as to be capable of more exquisite pain, and a more lasting duration, than their present frame will admit of. They shall have their part in the *lake which burneth with fire and brimstone*, which is the *second death*, which shall be executed with circumstances of terror and anguish, proportioned to their crimes.

Rev. xxi.
8.

—On the other hand ; with what a blooming air and inconceivable transport will the saints lift up their heads in that glorious day ! With what unutterable delight will they leave their dusty beds, and survey their empty tombs ; knowing that their *warfare is accomplished*, and that their LORD, whose approach they hail with the loudest *hosannas*, cometh *to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe*. Having through the *grace of Christ*, which is *sufficient* even for the weakest of his servants, overcome and been faithful to the end, they shall *not be hurt by the second death*, they shall *not die for ever*, but enter into eternal rest.

Rev. ii.
11.

And do you believe, brethren, that there will be such a vast difference between the future-states of the righteous and the wicked ?

I know

The Christian's Triumph over Death.

I know you believe it. Enquire then, what *influence* and *effect* this faith hath upon your hearts and lives; and *which* of these two states will be your's. Let me address you in the words of the great Mr. How*: "You
 " can never justify it to God, or your own
 " understandings, to remain in a dubious
 " uncertainty about a matter of so *vast* con-
 " sequence as this. Unconcernedness *here*
 " is the most unaccountable thing in the
 " whole world. Things will come to this
 " *issue* very shortly with us, that either death
 " must, as to us, be swallowed up in vic-
 " tory, or we be *swallowed up* of victorious
 " death. With what solicitude should we
 " all concern ourselves to be at a *certainty*!"

If you would desire *that* strong consolation which the text exhibits, let me urge you to *fly for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you*, to be daily exercising *repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*, to *redeem your time* and make a wise improvement of the present life. Thus you *will finish your course with joy, and when this earthly house of your tabernacle is dissolved, you will have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

2 Cor. v.
 1.

Lastly,

* How's works, Vol. II. page 422.

Lastly, Let the servants of Christ be calm and resigned, in the view of their own death, and when their pious friends are removed.

One would think there should be no occasion for such an exhortation as this, to any who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and have peace with God through him. One would naturally suppose that in the fulness of their hopes and joys, they would *desire to depart*, and it would be necessary frequently and strenuously to urge them to *wait patiently* for the coming of the LORD. One would think that instead of sorrowing as those who have no hope for them that sleep in Jesus, they should rather *rejoice* for the victory they have gained and the honor to which they are advanced. But alas! such is the unreasonable and unhappy influence which present things have upon our minds, such is the weakness of our faith and hope, so languid is our love to Christ, and so injudicious our affection to our friends, that we are loth to remove ourselves, and unwilling to part with them. God knew it would be so. *He knows our frame and remembers we are dust*, and therefore pities us, and has laid in such a stock of encouragements in his word, to counteract the bias of nature, and to correct the errors of sense.

Let

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Let us then (brethren) enter into the spirit, and admit the force of them. Remember, that although the combat may be sharp, and the apprehension grievous, yet the victory is sure. The enemy has been *often* vanquished, and 'tis only a *single feeble* effort he can possibly make. *Fear not* (says the redeemer) *I am he that liveth and was dead, and am alive for ever more, and have the keys of death and the unseen world.* Fear not this formidable enemy. He has slain his thousands; slain, did I say? rather, he has obtained some *little* advantage to his own irreparable loss and their everlasting gain. Though he strips you of the body, yet (to allude to St. Paul's words) *you only part with it for a season, that you may receive it for ever*, improved and beautified, and no more to see corruption. Let every sincere christian, endeavour from such considerations, to reconcile his mind to the approaches of death, and wish to encounter this last enemy, as a brave soldier does to enter upon an action, which he has the greatest reason to believe will finish the war, put an end to all his fatigues, perils, and terrors, and bring repose, honour, and reward. Frequently meditate, O *Christian*, on that glorious morning, when thou shalt awake, burst the bands,
of

Philem.
verse 15.

of death with sweet and inexpressible fur-
prize, arise with ten thousands of thy fel-
low-faints, and meet thy LORD with songs
of triumph, and everlasting joy upon your
heads. Then shall he applaud thy resolu-
tion and labour, fidelity and patience, be-
fore his father, the angels, and the assembled
world, and give thee *a crown of glory that
fadeth not away.*

Let these considerations also support our minds when our pious and valuable friends are removed.

In this view the apostle urges them, *If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him; the dead in Christ shall rise first, and the faints then alive (being changed) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words* *. And surely no words can be more full of consolation. Our pious friends departed, have gained the victory, and are *present with the Lord*. And though we are left behind in a world, which is *at best* a tiresome place, and *less desirable* since they were removed from it; yet we hope e'er long to be restored to them, to converse with

E

them

* 1 Theff. v. 14-18. compared with 1 Cor. 15. 51, &c.

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them upon more agreeable and advantageous terms, and spend an eternity together. If we are *followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises*, GOD will quickly call us to come up to them, and send a convoy of angels to fetch us to the world of spirits; and perhaps the first objects we may meet with there, may be some of our most intimate friends, sent to *congratulate* our safe arrival, and *conduct* us to the appointed mansions. And oh! with what joy and transport shall we meet them, and be welcomed by them. The *small* space of time the separation has continued, and in which we have known the sorrow of living without them, will endear them to us, and increase our bliss. Especially when we consider that there is no fear of *another* separation, that the *destructions of the enemy are come to a perpetual end*; and that death has yielded up all his power ever to divide us more.

Psal. ix. 7.

Let me particularly apply these consolations to you, my friends, on occasion of the fore Breach GOD has made upon you. What joy has it already been to your late worthy and pious pastor, to meet so many of his flock in the regions of the blessed, to whom he administered these precious consolations

tations in their last moments, and smoothed their passage to heaven ! What joy will it be to him to receive one and another of *you*, who have obeyed the gospel, to be partakers of his felicity ! What a delight will it be to him to receive your thanks for all his labours of love for the good of your souls, and join with you in adoring that grace, which wrought effectually for your salvation ; to which grace, you well know, he constantly ascribed his abilities and success ! What joy will it afford you to meet *him* there ; to inform him more fully than you can now do, what pleasure and improvement you have received from his labours while he lived, and his writings, by which, *being dead*, he is still *speaking* to you, with the most serious and affectionate address, and the most insinuating eloquence ! And with regard to him and all your brethren, who shall at length meet in our father's house ; how will mutual joy flow from heart to heart, when every enemy is conquered, and the tyranny of death at an end ; to be for ever instructing, improving, and entertaining, one another ; to recount your many struggles, temptations and victories ; and trace out the wondrous steps by which you were conducted to this happiness. These

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friendly dispositions will be carried to the height, conversation will never grow dull, and social entertainments never cloy. Fresh delight will be springing up in his soul, and your's, through eternity; in observing each other's improving knowledge and holiness, and sharing together in the smiles of the Redeemer, and the work and happiness of heaven.

After such comfortable thoughts as these, I have very little heart to renew, and increase your sorrows and my own, by entering into any particulars of the character of that great and good man, whom God has removed from us. Nor is it necessary I should; as he has been so long among you, and so faithfully and constantly watched over you. I may appeal to you all, that you have *fully known his doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, and afflictions, and his care of the churches.* He has been labouring among you with unexampled diligence, and unwearied zeal, above twenty years, with increasing honour, comfort and success. Notwithstanding his other most important relation, as a tutor, and the weight of business he continually had on his hands, he was *in labours* for your souls.

abun-

2 Tim. iii.

10.

abundant ; warning, encouraging, and comforting, with all the marks of a deep sense of religion upon his own soul, the most tender affection to you and your families, and the utmost solicitude for your everlasting welfare. The same disposition he carried with him in all his visits, and mingled the seriousness and piety of the christian minister with the politeness of the gentleman, and the freedom and cheerfulness of the friend. His great concern for the rising generation, was manifested in his discourses on *education* from the pulpit and the press, and his most affectionate addresses to your children in his catechetical lectures, and occasional visits. Ye know how heartily and compassionately he entered into your personal and relative afflictions ; how many disconsolate hearts he has made to rejoice by his liberality, his counsels, and his prayers. Ye know his faithfulness and gentleness in brotherly reproof, and the exercise of godly discipline. In a word, ye know that, to *his power*, and (unhappily for his family, for you, and other churches) *beyond his power*, he went about doing good, piously devising, and with the most resolute application, executing so many generous designs for the public good. — *Ye are witnesses, and God also*

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also, how much his public addresses were illustrated and enforced by his own temper and conduct, and how holily, and justly, and unblameably he behaved himself among you. —

By his writings (the value of which will, I am persuaded, be continually increasing) the world will judge, what a *pastor* God had favoured you with, and how very well you have been fed and taught for so many years. And they will naturally and justly expect, that you should be wise and judicious christians, and eminent for every branch of the christian temper. And *great* will be your guilt and your shame if you are not.

But, *beloved, I am persuaded better things of you*; and my persuasion is founded partly on my own knowledge of your temper and character, and partly on the solemn testimony your late pastor has borne to the goodness of them, in a passage in his *last Will*, which he desired might be communicated to you on this occasion, and which I mention with pleasure, as it is at once for your honour and your admonition. Speaking of his intention of being interred in the *place of your meeting*, he says, “ where I “ have spent the most delightful hours of “ my life, in assisting the devotions of as *se-* “ rious, as grateful, and as deserving a peo-
ple,

“ ple, as perhaps any minister had ever the
“ honour and happiness to serve ; cheerfully
“ persuading myself, that, when I am dead,
“ they will hear me speaking in my writings
“ with all due regard ; and making it my
“ last request to them, that those of them
“ who have, or can borrow, my *Family-*
“ *Expositor*, will read it over in their fami-
“ lies once at least, beginning the Lord’s-
“ day after my funeral ; and that they would
“ also read over in their families, on Lord’s-
“ day evenings, all my sermons which they
“ have, or can borrow, especially those on
“ *regeneration*, those on the *glory and grace*
“ *of CHRIST*, the sermons to *young persons*,
“ and that on the *one thing needful* ; and I
“ desire that every parent, that can procure
“ them, would read in their retirements, my
“ sermons on the *education of children*, with-
“ in one quarter of a year at least after my
“ death. And I make this request from an
“ affectionate desire of the edification and
“ salvation of souls ; and an humble hope
“ that, in consequence of it, I may glorify
“ God, even when I am laid in the dust”

I hope, *my friends*, you will pay a serious
and constant regard to this his last request,
out of gratitude for his services, and veneration
for his memory ; from a concern for
your

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your own further credit and comfort, and a desire to increase his joy, and your own, at the day of the LORD.

As to you, (my brethren and friends) who were more immediately under his eye and care; *GOD has taken your master from your head.* And you will naturally adopt the mournful words of *Elisha*, when he had
 2 Kings ii. 12. lost his tutor *Elijah*, *My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!* He was indeed a *father* to you: and I believe there are few of us, who have had the advantage of being his pupils, have found more real affection and tenderness, and a warmer concern for our welfare, in our natural parents, than we have found in him. You remember his quickness of apprehension, and remarkable felicity in the dispatch of business, and yet his most exemplary improvement and redemption of time. You know how faithfully he devoted his time and abilities to your service. How freely he communicated to you out of those large stores of knowledge with which GOD had furnished him: How fairly and candidly he proposed arguments and objections on every topic, on which he lectured. What pains he took to make you eminent christians, *able ministers of the new testament, and scribes well*

well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven.

You will, I am persuaded, join with me in acknowledging (to the praise of God) that our acquaintance with him, and relation to him, has been our honour and our happiness. May you and I remember his paternal counsels, prayers, and example, that (*through a supply of the Spirit of Jesus*) we may be fitted for eminent usefulness in the church, and may do honour to his memory and instructions!

It is but a just tribute to the worth of eminently wise and useful men, and of great advantage to survivors, to display at large the virtues of their character, and point out the means by which they became so eminent; and I am not without hope, that justice may hereafter be done, in some distinct account, to the distinguished abilities, eminent character, and extensive usefulness of the late reverend and learned Dr. *Doddridge*, who shone so conspicuously in the relations of a minister and tutor, and whose writings are in such general esteem. In the mean time what has been said concerning him, may serve to excite you *all*, to aspire after a temper and behaviour becoming your relation to him, whose removal, in the vigor of his faculties, we so justly, and shall so

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long

Phil. iv.

9.

long lament ; and, to add greater weight to the solemn exhortation of St. *Paul* to the *Philippians*, which, upon this occasion, I would address to you all : *Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in him, do : and the God of peace shall be with you.*

1 Cor. xv.

57.

To conclude : *G O D* has seen fit to call home his *good and faithful servant* ; and given him not only a calm, but a joyful dismissal from the labours and sufferings of life, and enabled him thereby to triumph over death. And when we recollect the words we have been meditating upon, and this fresh seal to the truth and the comfort of them ; and when by faith we look forward to that *weight of glory* reserved in heaven for us, and our pious friends ; let us even *now* join in the apostle's triumphant song, and say, *Thanks be to G O D, which giveth us the victory through our Lord J E S U S C H R I S T. Amen.*

T H E E N D.



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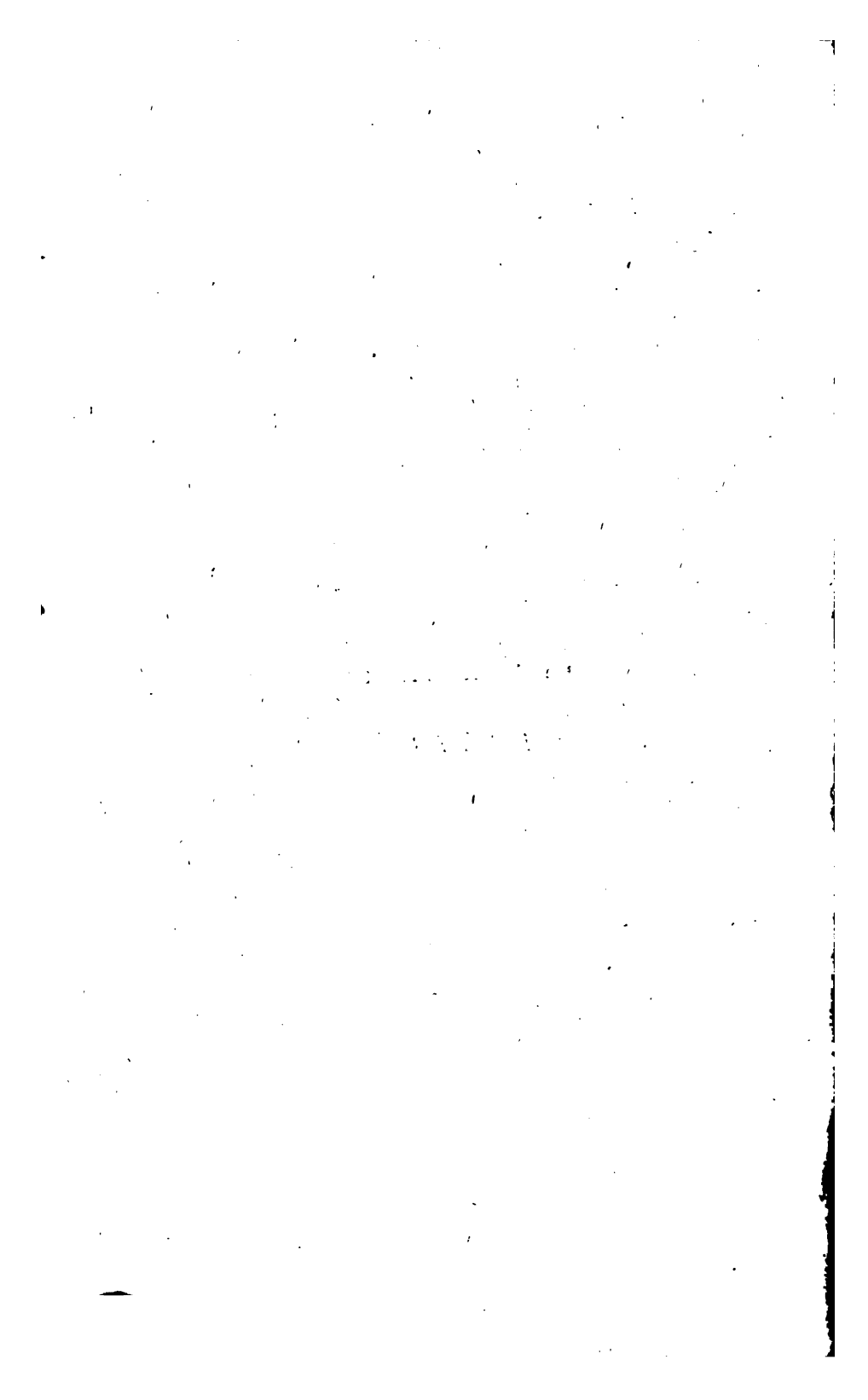
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2 SAMUEL iii. 34.

Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters; as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him.

IN this uncertain world we are ever liable to meet with awful changes. *Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.*^a *Man's apostate nature is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.*^b Burning coals cannot send forth sparks so numerous, or so quick and constant in their succession, as the afflictions of our mortal state. See, how high they rise, how wide they spread, how their influence reaches to every stage, every various condition, and every distinct relation of human life!

So incapable are we of looking thro' a train of future consequences, that we *know not what a day may bring forth.*^c Hence it comes to pass, that every unexpected event hath to us the appearance of novelty. And if any event be sudden and awful, calamitous and distressing, in proportion to its novelty, who can avoid being

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deeply

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^a 1 Chron. xxix. 15.

^c Prov. xxvii. 1.

^b Job v. 7.

deeply impressed? Yet in our more deliberate reflection and calmer moments, we shall see reason to conclude, that there is no event altogether new. *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.*^d

The sudden and awful death we are now lamenting, tho' new to us, hath had, in former days, its too many similar instances. It is very remarkable, that the first man who died out of our world, was an instance of this kind; even righteous *Abel*, whose precious blood was spilt by that daring murderer his wicked brother *Cain*. Another instance we have strongly marked out to us, in the words of the text. It was concerning *Abner*, captain of the host of *Israel*, that *David* himself, in a funeral oration at the grave, and as the chief mourner there, most pathetically said; *Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters; as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou.*

There is indeed such a peculiar suitableness in the text to the present mournful occasion, that the thoughts of every attentive hearer will need little assistance in considering,

First, What there is in the text remarkably expressive of the very afflictive scene, into which divine Providence hath now brought us: and,

Secondly,

^d Eccles. i. 9, 10.

Secondly, What useful lessons such a scene of affliction should inculcate upon us.

I. In considering what there is in the text, so remarkably expressive of our present affliction, you can scarce avoid observing these three things:—the speech which was made at the grave of a very respectable person;—a death which was brought about by the most execrable villany;—and that such a death of such a person excited a deep and universal concern.

1. Let us observe, that the text contains the speech, which was made at the grave of a very respectable person.

David, speaking at the grave of *Abner*, was sensibly struck at the loss of so great a man: such an able general, a person of such consummate valour and policy, nearly related to *Saul*, the preceding king of *Israel*, and who, but lately had the first hand in disposing of a kingdom. This accounts for the apparent emotion, with which *the king said unto his servants*, at the close of his funeral, *Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?**

We have lately been at the grave of a person, who was truly respectable for his *goodness*, which is far better than what the world calls *greatness*. He was a very useful member of society, an honest tradesman, an affectionate father, a kind master, and, what in his profession of a *mill*er is of no inconsiderable value, even

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the poorest people in the town will testify for him, that he was a considerate, generous and obliging friend and neighbour. He had been about twenty-five years, I hope I may truly say, a worthy communicant in this church. Methinks I see him, as he was accustomed to sit in this place of worship on Lord's-days, and all other convenient seasons; and who was there among all his fellow-worshippers, either more constant, more serious, or more candid in attending Gospel-ministrations?

2. The next thing observable in the text, is the manner of describing a death, that was brought about by the most execrable villany.

Such was the death of *Abner*. He was treacherously murdered by *Joab*, from the odious, but too common, motives of malice and revenge, of pride and envy. *Joab* was determined, at any rate, to rob *Abner* of all his earthly power and grandeur, and particularly of his growing interest at *David's* court, and in *David's* friendship. In order to perpetrate such a robbery, *Joab* scrupled not to give *Abner* a private stab. This was long after stiled by *David*, in language admirably fit to paint to the life the most detestable hypocrisy, perfidy and cruelty: *Joab's shedding the blood of war in peace, and putting the blood of war upon his girdle, that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet.*^f

While

^f 1 Kings ii. 5.

While *David* was speaking at *Abner's* grave, he had this wretched murderer full in sight; for *Joab* himself was at the funeral. Such a criminal ought, indeed, to have been immediately arrested and imprisoned, in order to his suffering the death due to a murderer. But the sacred history gives us the painful conviction, that *Joab* was too powerful a villain for so equitable a prince as *David* himself to punish according to his deserts. Every generous mind must therefore feel for *David*, when he was obliged to say, *I am this day weak, tho' anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me. The Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.**

It must however, have been not a little mortifying to *Joab*, when he heard the description of the manner of *Abner's* death, given by *David* in the text. It was telling *Joab* to his face, that instead of bravely fighting with *Abner*, overcoming him in a fair combat, and detaining him as a prisoner, with his *hands bound*, and his *feet put into fetters*; on the contrary, he had treated *Abner* with the greatest injustice and cruelty, and in every respect so dishonourable and treacherous, that all men would look upon him with deserved abhorrence and contempt. With what confusion of mind must *Joab* hear from the lips of *David*, such language as this? *'O Abner! thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters, by those that conquered thee in the field of battle; but as the bravest, the wisest, and the best of men may fall before wicked*

* 2 Sam. iii. 39.

wicked men, so fellest thou by the hand of an assassin.'

And now, let the words of the text be thought enough, to describe that most execrable villany, by which our worthy friend was so lately brought to his untimely death. It is too painful to dwell upon such a subject. Nor have we the wretched murderer now present, to hear this discourse, as *David* had when he was delivering the funeral oration in the text. Blessed be God there is nothing in our own happy country, to hinder the course of publick justice, so as to prevent murderers, of any rank or quality, from receiving their deserved punishment. But far happier still shall we think ourselves, if we may have some good reason to hope, that the immortal soul, even, of a murderer, is rescued from the more bitter pains of eternal death, by sincere repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Indeed, every principle of humanity and religion should oblige us to pray for such a happy change, in the temper and character of any malefactor, tho' he were one whom we had never heard of before. But, in the present case, we have more peculiar cause for wishing *this* criminal may become a sincere penitent, as his family and friends are so well known, and so much respected, in this neighbourhood. Let us suppose ourselves to have a relative in some such miserable situation, and surely the supposition will make us most tenderly feel for them. And let us express our sympathy by our fervent prayers, that this best support and consolation, which their affliction is capable of receiving, may be afforded, by the spirit and grace of God effectually

effectually working upon the heart and conscience of a robber and murderer.

3. The text concludes with assuring us, that the concern for such a death, of such a person, was deep and universal.

Never could any funeral oration have more advantageous circumstances concurring together, to render it grateful to every ear, and impressive on every heart. *David*, the royal prophet and the sweet singer of *Israel*, was the illustrious orator. The assembly was numerous and in every view respectable, consisting of princes, priests and people, including at least all *David's* courtiers, and the inhabitants of his royal city. At their first coming to *Abner's* grave we are told, *the king lift up his voice, and wept, and all the people wept.*^a But *David* had no sooner delivered his oration, than *all the people wept again over Abner*. They could not hear, how basely such blood was spilt, without a general groan. Tho' they had wept plentifully before, yet now they poured out floods of tears afresh.

And when have we known any awful event, relating to a private person, that has more engaged the attention of town and country, or filled every breast with more tender sympathy, with more sincere sorrow? But few members of society were more generally known than *Mr. Best*, or more generally respected. A death so sudden, so awful, and of such a person, is inexpressibly shocking to thousands. Every countenance hath made the discovery of deep concern

^a 2 Sam. iii. 32.

cern. Every tongue has told the dismal story. But none can tell, what bereaved friends and relatives have felt, and are continuing to feel, on this most sorrowful occasion.

In such particulars as these, the text appears to be remarkably expressive of our present affliction. We are now to consider,

II. What useful lessons such a scene of affliction hath a more peculiar tendency to inculcate upon us.

1. It should more deeply convince us, that sin is the worst and greatest of all evils.

The report of robbery and murder is horrible to every ear, and makes every heart tremble. But are we not too little affected with what the Lord Jesus Christ, that faithful and true witness, does himself report, concerning the evil nature of sin, as it is rooted in all our hearts, ever since the first apostacy of man from God? *From within, says the Holy Jesus, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evils come from within.*¹ So far as any of these enormities relate to our outward deportment only, we may perhaps think ourselves, and be thought by others, to be irreproachable. But can any one of us lay our hand upon our breast, and appeal to God, as a witness for us, that none of these evils were ever found within us? Have we

¹ Mark vii. 21—23.

we seriously considered, what God himself is represented as seeing in the inhabitants of the old world, *that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually?*^k Do we recollect, how the same divine testimony is awfully repeated, after the flood had destroyed a world of sinners, that *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth?*^l When Solomon asks, *who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?*^m is not the inquiry well calculated to promote, in every man, the most important self-knowledge, self-condemnation, and penitent return to God? In what other way, or on what other principles, could upright Job say, *how should man be just with God? if he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.*ⁿ If we really discern the plagues of our own hearts, we shall see an admirable propriety in David's penitent reasonings and prayers, when he says, *If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities: O Lord, who shall stand?*^o *Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.*^p

We every one of us feel our indignation rise against a robber and a murderer, and it is a just and generous indignation. But do we perceive our indignation rise against the evil thoughts and vile inclinations of our own hearts? We wish to have the hand of publick justice free society from such plagues, as robbers and murderers. But is it our frequent prayer to God, thro' Christ, to be delivered from the plagues
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^k Gen. vi. 5.

^m Prov. xx. 9.

^o Psalm cxxx. 3.

^l Gen. viii. 21.

ⁿ Job ix. 2, 3.

^p Psalm xix. 12.

of our own hearts? When *the scribes and pharisees, at Jerusalem, brought to Christ a woman taken in adultery, and artfully tempted him to say, that she should be stoned, that they might have to accuse him; our Lord made this convincing appeal to their consciences: He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last.*¹ On the contrary, when Mr. Bradford, an eminent martyr, in the bloody reign of Queen Mary, saw a malefactor going to Tyburn, he humbly adored the distinguishing grace of God, ‘to which, says he, it is entirely owing, that *John Bradford* is not in that man’s condition.’ While we are pleased with the thought, of having the life of a robber and murderer sacrificed to the peace and safety of society; let us, at the same time, earnestly desire to have our most secret sins appear to us, as the greatest of evils, as the very plagues which threaten our immortal souls with eternal death, *except we repent and be converted.*’

2. This scene of affliction may lead us to reflect on the vanity, which attends human life, even in its most prosperous state.

Like our deceased friend, till a very few minutes before his death, we may be in health and vigour of body and mind; every desirable comfort on earth may surround us; our worldly affairs may prosper. But, by some evil accident, or some instrument of wickedness, which
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¹ John viii. 3—9.

² Acts iii. 19.

we could not possibly foresee, and in a moment we thought not of, all our enjoyments, and even life itself, may be taken from us, and no mortal wisdom, care, or integrity, be able to prevent it. In this view of our state and condition, we are obliged to assent to *Solomon's* conclusion, as perfectly seasonable and unexceptionable, and under the full force of conviction, to cry out, *Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity!*¹ We can even make *David's* important addition to the humbling reflection, and say, *Verily, every man, at his best state, is altogether vanity!*¹

Alas! our reflections, tho' just, are apt to come too late. We are prone for a long time to shut our eyes, when they ought to be always open. How insensibly are we led to trust in mortal life, and its precarious comforts, tho' as moveable as the waves of the sea! This or that shocking event may draw from our lips the cry of vanity, while in the prevailing temper of our minds, we may be of their number, whose *inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations.*² Easily may we approve our Lord's description of the rich fool, and as readily join in condemning such folly; but at the same time, may be secretly saying to our own Soul, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry; not considering that God may say, even, to us, ye fools, this night, or this morning, or this moment, your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be which you have provided?*³

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Under

¹ Eccles. i. 2.² Psalm xlix. 11.³ Psalm xxxix. 5.⁴ Luke xii. 19, 20.

Under all our weakness and folly, divine compassions are yearning over us, and *the Spirit of the Lord is striving with us.*^x To us is that voice of mercy as applicable, as it ever was to *Israel* of old, *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!*^y For us hath *Moses* dictated that necessary petition, as well as for *Israel*, *Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*^z

3. Let us, on this occasion, thankfully acknowledge our obligations to divine Providence, for the continuance of our lives and comforts.

When *David* devoutly said to God, *My times are in thy hand;*^a he rejoiced to think that his life and all his comforts were entirely at the disposal of unerring wisdom, almighty power, and unchangeable love and grace. He saw his own hand, as well as the hand of his best earthly friends, utterly insufficient for such a trust. And as for the hand of any enemy, he saw, by faith, its absolute impotence to do any thing against him, except what his God, his all-sufficient friend should, for wise and gracious purposes, see fit to permit or appoint. Thus his Spirit was reconciled to, and made triumphant over, every thing that he at any time felt from the hand of violence and cruelty. Therefore he prayed in faith, *Arise, O Lord, deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword;*
from

^x Gen. vi. 3.

^y Psalm xc. 12.

^y Deut. xxii. 29.

^z Psalm xxxi. 15.

from men, which are thy hand, O Lord.^b Therefore by faith he bore *Shimei's* curses, only saying, *Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him.*^c

If we are continued in the peaceful possession of every enjoyment of life, we have so much the more need of holy caution, lest our treacherous hearts erect themselves into self-sufficiency and self-applause. Then *the prosperity of fools shall destroy them,*^d when to the dishonour of God, and to the cherishing and strengthening of their own pride and ingratitude, *they offer abominable sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.*^e Certainly, if our lives and comforts are continued, it is infinitely more owing to the gracious providence of God, than to any wisdom or prudence, any activity or diligence, any industry or integrity of our own. How perfectly suitable to the precarious, dependant and feeble state and condition of mortal life, is that apostolical advice; *Go to now, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain. Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow; for what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*^f With what humility does an inspired Prophet teach us to confess; *O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps?*^g And if,

^b Psalm xvii. 13, 14.

^d Prov. i. 12.

^f James iv. 13—15.

^c 2 Sam. xvi. 11.

^e Hab. i. 16.

^g Jer. x. 23.

if, in all our ways we acknowledge God, it is promised, that, so far as shall be for his glory; and for our spiritual and eternal welfare, he will direct our paths.^a He will make every thing work together for our good.¹ He will guide us with his counsel, and afterward receive us to glory.²

Never have the changing scenes of mortal life been filled with such praises and thanksgivings, as when God hath been most humbly and devoutly acknowledged in every thing, and his promises most entirely depended upon. See this in David, and let us admire and imitate. Say as he did, it is God that performeth all things for me.¹ I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.^m Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles.ⁿ

- 4- Tho^s the present affliction is very grievous, we may be comfortably assured, that every sincere christian hath a treasure, which no robber can take away; and a life, which no murtherer can destroy.

The sincere christian is one, who repents towards God, and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ

^a Prov. iii. 6.

² Psalm lxxiii. 24.

^m Psalm iv. 8.

¹ Rom. viii. 28.

¹ Psalm lvii. 2.

ⁿ Psalm ciii. 1-5.

Christ for salvation, and 'who demonstrates the sincerity of his repentance and faith by new, holy and persevering obedience. Such a sincere christian is *the wise man*, whom our Lord represents and describes, *which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.*^o Wise, indeed, not only to build upon a rock for stability, but in the height of Heaven itself! Every true christian *lays up for himself treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.*^p Far from being exempted from the most calamitous and disastrous circumstances incident to this mortal state, it may even happen to the true christian, that other men may most unjustly and cruelly *kill his body, but, with all their rage and malice, they are not able to kill his soul.*^q The noblest *life of a true christian is hid with Christ in God;*^r and is therefore safe, not merely from mortal men, but even from devils. Tho' Satan *was a murtherer from the beginning;*^s and tho', *as a roaring lion, he walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,*^t especially amongst the sincere disciples of Christ; yet all his most subtle and powerful efforts shall be rendered abortive, and he himself shall finally be triumphed over by the feeblest of Christ's humble followers. To have such an unequal combat issue in such victory, may, to an eye of sense, seem the most improbable thing in the world. But the divine
promise

^o Mat. vii. 24, 25.

^q Mat. x. 28.

^r John viii. 44.

^p Mat. vi. 20.

^s Col. iii. 3.

^t 1 Pet. v. 8.

promise puts it beyond all doubt, by which sincere christians have abundant assurance given them, that, as *the captains of Israel*, instructed by *Joshua*, *put their feet upon the necks of the kings of the canaanitish nations*,^u in token of compleat victory over them; so *the God of peace shall bruise Satan under their feet shortly*.^w

In the present case, there is peculiar pleasure in thinking what good reason we have to hope, that the separate spirit of our deceased friend is now, by the hand of violence, only a little sooner and more suddenly possessed of heavenly riches, and of eternal life and glory.

Such lively hope in the blessedness of his separate spirit, is perfectly consistent with our lamentation over our own loss, and the occasion of it. Well may our hearts bleed, to think of the infatuation and delusion of a fellow-mortal, for the imaginary gain of a trifle, to barter away body and soul, his own present and eternal happiness, and spread anguish and sorrow thro' a family and a neighbourhood! What madness is in the love of money, to force every tender feeling from the heart, and fill it with all the horrors of cruelty and blood! How blinded is the eye of reason, when violence and wrong, injustice and oppression, are made use of to secure peace and repose, and as the most probable expedients for the supply of every want! Lord! what is man? that he should ever divest himself, at this rate, of humanity itself, and become a rival with the most ravenous of the brutal creation! While blood cries for vengeance, let us mourn and lament for the
murderer,

^u Joshua x. 24.

^w Rom. xvi. 20.

murderer, as well as the murdered; since, for the latter, our weeping will surely be turned into rejoicing, but for the former, there will be too much need for everlasting lamentation.

5. It is of no little importance, to mingle this one caution with the present afflictive scene, not to let any death kindle in your breasts such keen resentment, nor excite such deep concern, as the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for our sins.

We have lately joined with town and country, in our detestation of a murderer, and in expressing our just and generous concern for our murdered friend. Would to God there had been as general and cordial a detestation of our own sins, by which we have every one of us murdered and *crucified the Lord of glory!** Christ *was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him. All we, like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own sinful way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He poured out his soul unto death. He bare the sin of many.*† Our sins against a holy God, have really done that, which the Apostle so directly charged upon the immediate murderers and crucifiers of Christ, when he told thousands of them to their faces: *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.* Unspeakably happy should we each of us be, if, like those thousands of Christ's penitent

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* 1 Cor. ii. 8.

† Isai. liii, 5, 6, 12.

nitent murderers, *we were pricked in our heart,* and with the keenest resentment against our own sins, and with the deepest sorrow for our crucified Lord and Saviour, we were each of us crying out, *what shall we do?* Happy for us beyond expression, if we so repent every one of us, as to answer the design of our having been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and thereby obtain the remission of sins,² and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in this blessed Redeemer!³ May God deliver us from their inconceivable misery, who, having crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame, shall then be found among the impenitent and christless, when Christ shall come with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and who therefore shall wail because of him!⁴

6. Tho' joy may seem to be totally banished from us by the present distress, yet in this let us even now rejoice, that thro' the grace of God in Christ, there is forgiveness and eternal life, for the greatest of sinners.

All laws, both human and divine, require that a murderer should not live. It is awful to observe, in the sacred history concerning *Joab*, that tho', after murdering *Abner*, he added to his guilt the murder of *Amazor*, another of the great captains of the host of *Israel*; yet we never read of any penitent concern, which *Joab* ever expressed, for having committed such enormous

² Acts ii. 23, 37, 38.

³ Acts xxvi. 18.

⁴ Heb. vi. 6. Rev. i. 7.

mous crimes ; nor any sincere and earnest desire he ever had to obtain pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. On the contrary, when *David* himself was convicted of adultery and murder, his repentance was as truly illustrious, as his crimes had been dreadfully aggravated. No sooner had the royal penitent made his humble confession, *I have sinned against the Lord*, but the prophet *Nathan* said unto him, *the Lord also hath put away thy sin ; thou shalt not die.*^c Such was the glorious extent and efficacy of Gospel grace, even under the Old Testament. This is well accounted for in the New Testament, where the acceptance and salvation of every sincere penitent, in whatever age or nation, ever since the first apostacy of man from God, is abundantly proved to be the sole fruit and purchase of the meritorious sufferings and death, and prevailing mediation and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. With peculiar propriety may he therefore be stiled, *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

As the Gospel is *good tidings of great joy* ;^d so, with chearful confidence, may we apply its particular declarations of pardoning love and grace, and consider each of them as a distinct and inexhaustible fountain of joy unspeakable and full of glory. With how much pleasure have thousands of penitent sinners, read or heard those gracious and heart-reviving words of the compassionate Jesus ! *All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme.*^e Or those encouraging

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^c 2 Sam. xii. 13.^e Mark iii. 28.^d Luke ii. 10.

ging declarations of Peter! *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*^f To Christ gave all the Prophets witness, that thro' his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.^g Or that, to which Paul adds his own happy experience! when he says, *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*^h Or what the beloved John writes, with this professed design, *that our joy may be full!* when he testifies, *that the blood of Jesus Christ the son of God cleanseth us from all sin.* And, *that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*ⁱ By such good and comfortable words, such healing balm, such wells of salvation, such rivers of pleasure and delight, such dawnings and foretastes of eternal joy, how have the penitent and contrite been revived and strengthened! how have their desponding and despairing thoughts been banished! how has light broke in and scattered the thickest darkness of the mind! how have the deepest sorrows been relieved, and changed for overflowing joys! how have even the most deadly wounds of the heart been healed up, and restored to perfect soundness! Thither let us go, with joy and confidence, under all the darkness, diseases, and guilt of our own souls. And, to the utmost of our capacities and opportunities let us there apply for our fellow-sinners, even for those of them whose characters and condition seem to be most hopeless and helpless, without
excepting

^f Acts iii. 19.^h 1 Tim. i. 15.^g Acts x. 43.ⁱ 1 John i. 4, 7, 9.

excepting the most vicious and profligate, no not the most abandoned publicans and harlots, robbers and murtherers. To conclude,

7. Let this sorrowful scene excite us to secure, without delay, our personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, that death, in the most sudden moment, or in the most violent form, may find us ready.

This is the indispensable duty, and the highest happiness of every individual among us. To this we are urged by the worth and excellency of our souls; by the frailties, diseases and totterings of our mortal tabernacles; by the vanities of earthly good; by the nearness and certainty of death, but the uncertainty of the time when we are to die; by all the infinitely important realities of the eternal world; by every divine perfection and promise; by all the awful and lovely name and offices of our heavenly Father, our Saviour, and our Sanctifier; and by our strict account, which it is impossible for us to avoid giving up, before the tremendous bar of the universal judge. While ten thousand motives present themselves, to solicit our immediate and earnest attention to this *one thing needful*, they may all be properly considered, as either expressed, or implied, in that faithful counsel of our ever adorable and infinitely compassionate Lord, when he says, *Watch, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Be ye ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.**

This,

* Mat. xxiv. 42, 44.

This, we hope, was the readiness of Mr. *Best*, for his sudden and violent death. In that distressing moment, we hope, he was *found in Christ*, because it had long been his chief desire and labour *that he might win Christ*.¹ We hope, that *to him to live was Christ*, and consequently that to him *to die was gain*.^m We hope; he is suddenly entered on that glory, for which thro' grace he was many years preparing; and that he is now reaping the blessed fruits of all his repentance and faith, his watching and praying, his self-denial and circumspect walking, his divine love and holy obedience.

Could Mr. *Best* now offer his parting advice to each of us, O, how earnestly would he call upon us, and entreat us, not to live one day longer, without having a well-grounded hope, that we are reconciled to God, that our sins are pardoned, thro' the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; that our hearts and lives are sanctified by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit; and that we are looking and labouring more for things eternal than temporal, for heaven than earth, *for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, than for the meat which perisheth!*

Could Mr. *Best* once more give counsel to his sons, how would every word be mingled with his tears and blood! After all his comfort in them, and all his hopes concerning them; yet to be so violently torn from their embraces, and so abruptly to leave them, encompassed with dangers and enemies, how would love and zeal, death and eternity, give such life to every expression, as they never were conscious to before; tho'

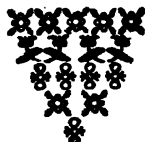
¹ Phil. iii. 8, 9.

^m Phil. i. 21.

tho' the same sentiments had been repeated to them a thousand times ! How would he importunately beseech, and solemnly charge them, still *to flee from the wrath to come*, by flying to the Lord Jesus Christ ! How vehemently would he warn them against an ensnaring world, against the company and conversation of the ungodly, against every thing that hardens the heart, stifles convictions, or puts death and eternity at a distance ! With what seriousness would he recommend a life of converse with God, in devout meditation and prayer ! How would he strive, with all his might, to increase their love to God and Christ, strengthen their resolutions for strict godliness, fix their attention, more than ever, to the word of God, and join them in closer and more intimate friendship with the people of God ! How would all the bowels of a father yearn over them, and every tender, melting consideration be urged with them, *to let brotherly love continue*, and to their utmost to be helpful to one another in all their temporal concerns, but especially in those which belong to their souls and eternity.

Never, I verily believe, have four brothers, in the maturity of manhood, and under heavy affliction, felt more tenderly, or lamented more affectionately. Your very souls, my dear friends, have been all poured out over such a father, and such a death. You have thousands who pity you, and mourn with you, and for you ; tho' such an universal sympathy is absolutely unable to heal your wounded hearts, or even wipe away your tears. But you have one consolation in reserve. If four such brothers shall perseveringly walk as the sons of God, as the heirs

heirs of Heaven, as joint heirs with Jesus Christ, then all your weeping will end in rejoicing, your dear Father will meet you again with songs of triumph; millions of angels and saints will rejoice in you, and rejoice with you, thro' a glorious eternity. May God of his infinite mercy grant this thro' Jesus Christ!
Amen.



T H E

T H E
N A R R A T I V E.

MR. *Francis Best*, whose parents were persons of serious piety, was born at *Kidderminster*, *November 27, 1703*, in the next morning after the great wind. At his death he wanted five months to compleat his *sixty-eighth* year. Tho' he was so far advanced in life, yet he still retained a large measure of strength and activity.

For many years he had been accustomed to walk from his own house, at *Caldwall-Mill*, near *Kidderminster*, to *Bewdley-Market*, every *Saturday*, about three measured Miles, in a publick and very pleasant foot-path. On the *eighth of June, 1771*, being *Saturday morning*, he went from his own house as usual, about *half after nine*. His way to *Bewdley* led through a field, where a thick hedge on his right hand concealed from him the view of another and more frequented foot-path that lay through an adjoining field; both which paths soon after unite. In the said field he was about mid-way between *Kidderminster* and *Bewdley*, and upon ground so much elevated, as to have an extensive prospect of the surrounding country. The *Murtherer* was met between *that* and *Kidderminster*, by a man coming from *Bewdley*, but a little while before *Mr. Best* came thither. There, it appears, the *Murtherer* lingered, till *Mr. Best* had passed him, and then immediately following *Mr. Best*, knocked him down with the stroke of a thick oak bludgeon, on the back part of his head. It nevertheless appears, that *Mr. Best* got hold of the bludgeon, nor could the *Murtherer* recover the full command of it till he had cut *Mr. Best's* hand with a knife, and then, after repeating his blows, he cut his throat. He took out of *Mr. Best's* breeches pockets, it is thought, about *twelve pounds*; but missed *sixty guineas*, that were in a canvas bag in his waistcoat pocket; for

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Mr,

Mr. *Best* happened at that time, to have more money about him than usual. At that juncture, a man was walking in the other path, heard a distressing cry, and soon after its ceasing, saw a man, who, as it afterwards appeared, was the *Murtherer*, making his escape over a distant hedge, in a direction contrary to both the foot-paths. And presently another man, who was coming from *Bewdley*, passed close by the mangled corps, then almost breathless, knew it to be Mr. *Best*, and, filled with horror and trembling, ran with all speed, to give the first intelligence of it to Mr. *Best's* family.

The *Murtherer*, *John Child*, was born at *Wribben-hall*, a suburb of *Bewdley*, yet in the parish of *Kidderminster*, of a worthy family, to whom he had long been, by his great irregularities, an unspeakable burthen and sorrow. He was about *twenty-five* years old. His person was tall and stout, but very distinguishing, by reason of a *club-foot* on his left side. He had been apprentice to a *Die-faker* at *Birmingham*, and afterwards became a journeyman *Weaver* in *Kidderminster*. But his idleness, bad company, gaming, cocking, and many other excesses, prompted him to those methods for his support, which hastened his miserable end.

He acknowledged in jail, that himself only was concerned in breaking open a chest, in the house of Mr. *Thompson*, Cork-cutter, in *Wribben-hall*, and stealing from thence *seventeen guineas* and *one thirty-six shilling piece*. By this particular confession he vindicated the characters of two other men, *viz. Andrew Fitzgerald* and *Barnard Whithrow Garnish*, who were both of them confined in *Worcester Jail*, on suspicion of that robbery, and were, at the last *Affixes*, discharged by proclamation.

Child being well known to Mr. *Best*, he must have way-laid him, with an intent to murder as well as rob him; except he had thoughts of flying afterward from his country, since his *club-foot* made him so easily discovered and known. After murdering Mr. *Best*, his first retreat was to a retired part of the banks of the river *Severn*, where he endeavoured to free himself from the blood with which he was besmeared, though he did it very imperfectly. He then crossed the river at *Blackstone ferry*, and was observed, immediately on entering the boat, to fall down flat on his face, and to draw his *club-foot* under him. The same day, about three in the afternoon, he appeared in *Kidderminster*, hired a horse to carry him

to

to *Birmingham*, and ordered it to be ready for him to mount at the *Turnpike*, which is about half a mile out of the town. In the mean time, he called at a shop or two, bought himself leather breeches and other things, and, mingling with company that were talking over the prevailing news of the horrid murder, he added some of his own remarks upon it: he particularly observed, with an oath, that *the Murderer, whoever he was, would be very sorry at missing the sixty guineas*. He had been met near the place, where the murder was committed, by a man and woman, who were both of them very soon taken up at *Kidderminster*, on suspicion; and who, in giving the magistrates an account of themselves, described him by his *club-foot*. He had also been seen going toward the same place, by Mr. *Callow*, the bailiff of *Kidderminster*, who was that morning walking to *Bewdley*, in company with another inhabitant of *Kidderminster*, and as Mr. *Callow* heard of the murder before he left *Bewdley*, he was determined to seize him as soon as possible. On the whole, his riding away to *Birmingham* was seasonably prevented by his being so speedily taken into custody that afternoon; and the next day, *June the ninth*, he confessed, before the magistrates, that he was an accomplice, but charged the murder upon *Thomas Bourne*, who was then in the service of a farmer about six miles from *Kidderminster*.

On *Monday morning, June the tenth*, he attempted his own death, by stabbing himself in the belly with a little knife, which had incautiously been lent him while eating his breakfast. Though he then thought himself dying, he still persisted in charging *Bourne* with the murder. The wound, which he gave himself, left him very ill, and in that situation, before the middle of the day, he, by several messengers sent for Mr. *Fawcett*, to pray with him. The office, in such circumstances, was very undesirable. Mr. *Fawcett*, in conversing with him, only aimed at alarming his conscience, with a just sense of this heinous crime, and of all his sins of heart and life. He particularly asked him, why he should attempt to murder himself, if another person was the murderer of Mr. *Best*? *I was*, says he, *an accomplice, and therefore I am as guilty, as if I had been the Murderer*. When Mr. *Fawcett* asked him, what he more especially desired to have mentioned in prayer, he very sensibly and seriously replied,

replied, that God would be pleased to give me sincere repentance and faith.

On Saturday, June the *fifteenth*, he again sent for Mr. *Fawcett*, who then expressly told him, that he waited upon him without any desire to hear a confession of his crime, nor had any authority to ask it; but that all his desire was, to convince him of the omniscience of God, the impossibility of concealing any part of his guilty temper and conduct from the eternal judge, and the absolute necessity of his confessing all the sins of his heart and life to God, in order to his sincere repentance and well-grounded hope of divine forgiveness through a Redeemer; that, if ever he became a real penitent, there would be no need to ask him the circumstances of his late crime, but he would freely and without the least disguise lay open all the aggravations of his injustice and cruelty before his fellow-creatures, with the deepest self-abhorrence; and that he would be far more grieved and distressed for his sins against God, than for any shame or misery which his sins brought upon him in the sight of Men. He readily acknowledged the propriety of such sentiments, and that he now saw their truth and importance more than ever. He again desired prayer, that God would give him sincere repentance and faith. It was pleasing to hear him again and again express so good a desire. And it must be allowed, that his religious education had laid a foundation for much more knowledge of divine things, than is usually to be met with in persons of such an abandoned character. Would to God, this *Narrative*, could conclude with representing the genuine evidences of his sincere conversion, though *at the eleventh hour*! Nothing in the world would have afforded more general satisfaction, and especially to his mourning relatives.

He was visited with great compassion and assiduity by the Rev. Mr. *Mathews*, the Curate of *Kidderminster*, till his removal to *Worcester Jail*. His conveyance thither was in a sort of *Horse-Litter*, on account of his remaining weakness, occasioned by the wound in his belly.

Before the *Affize* came on, he confessed to the *Ordinary*, the Rev. Mr. *Taylor*, that he had no accomplice in the murder. Yet in the course of his trial, on *Tuesday, July the sixteenth*, he denied that he had any hand, either in the murder, or robbery, contrary to the strongest evidences of so many witnesses upon oath. One of them testified the identity of a piece of money, which was found

found on him, when he was apprehended, and that the said witness had paid the said piece, with other cash, to Mr. Best's son, on the *Thursday* evening before the murder; the said son also testified, that he had paid the same piece to his father, Mr. Best, the same evening. Two other witnesses declared, that they found the bludgeon hid in the hedge, about three hundred yards from the place, where the murder was committed, and near to the very spot, where Child, while he was in custody at *Kidderminster*, had given direction to the magistrates to seek it. The carpenter also, out of whose shop the *Murderer* had taken the bludgeon, testified that he missed it, the very morning when the murder was committed, and that it exactly corresponded to another part of it, which was left behind in his shop, and from which the *Murderer* had, unknowing to the carpenter, divided it with a saw. Another witness testified, that having been Child's school-fellow and intimate friend, he went to see him three or four days after his attempt to murder himself, and that he then said to Child, "Friend Jack, I suppose after Mr. Best was dead, you thought every bush or tree that moved, was in pursuit of you, and that if you could have restored his life to him again, you would have given all the world." Upon this, Child smote his breast, and cried out, O God! if I had ten thousand worlds, I would give them all to enjoy one hour's peace which I had before.

His sentence was, to be hanged at the county gallows, and his body to be dissected and anatomized. He stood more than two hours before the honourable Judge *Aston*, and a crowded court, with amazing confidence and unconcern, and received the awful sentence of death; and the serious and pertinent address of his lordship, without any apparent alteration of countenance or spirits. When the bludgeon, with which Mr. Best was knocked down, was produced in court, he did not seem to be at all affected with the sight of it, but very composedly declared, *he never saw it before*; though, as hinted above, it was found by his own direction, near the place where the murder was committed. Just after sentence was passed on him, he boldly asked the judge, to the surprise of all that heard it, *Who was to have the money that was found upon him, when he was apprehended?* His lordship answered, "that no one had any right to it, but the executor or administrator of the deceased." Accordingly

ingly, Mr. *Watkins*, town-clerk of *Kidderminster*, and one of the coroners of the county, delivered it to the late Mr. *Best's* son.

According to his sentence, he was executed at the county gallows, on *Thursday, July the eighteenth*, and the next morning his body was taken to *Worcester Infirmary* for dissection. *Thomas Bourne*, whom *Child* had falsely accused of being an accomplice with him in the said murder and robbery, was discharged from jail on *Monday, July the fifteenth*, and was present to see his execution, the friends of Mr. *Best* having lodged no indictment against him.

The Rev. Mr. *Taylor*, the *Ordinary*, in his letter, dated *July 21, 1771*, says concerning the unhappy *John Child*: "His behaviour after sentence, and at execution, was very decent, and seemingly devout. I daily visited him ever since he was in prison, almost spent the whole day with him on *Wednesday*, and on *Thursday* from between *seven* and *eight* of the clock, till he suffered, was wholly with him in reading, prayer, and the most pressing exhortation. When he related to me the horrid deed, just before he left the jail, it was accompanied with a flood of tears, and an ardent desire to be reconciled to the family of the *deceased*, and was sorry that it was not in his power to make any farther atonement to them, than by acknowledging his guilt. At the gallows he acknowledged both the murder and robbery, and exhorted the by-standers to take warning, and to be careful how they broke the Sabbath; to avoid bad houses, and gaming, as well as bad company, which had been the causes of his untimely end."

The writer of a paper, inserted in the *Worcester Journal*, *July 18, 1771*, and signed, *Bewdley, D.* says on this occasion: "It seems natural to desire and hope, from the above circumstances, that the justices, magistrates, and constables, will more than ever exert themselves, with peculiar zeal and vigilance, to discover and suppress all disorderly publick houses, as they are bound to do by the nature and design of their offices, and the oaths they have solemnly taken; and that they will have a watchful eye over those, who are often absent from home, frequenters of markets and fairs, where they can have no proper business; suspected of gaming and gambling, and who have no visible honest way of supporting themselves and their families. It is much

“ to be wished, that magistrates would particularly exert
 “ their authority, to suppress cockings; not merely be-
 “ cause they are inhuman, a reproach to a christian na-
 “ tion, especially to its magistracy; but because they are
 “ the ruin of many persons and families, and the sources
 “ of fraud, violence, and cruelty. It is also much to
 “ be wished, that the clergy, and all parents and masters,
 “ may be led by these circumstances, which have been
 “ the subjects of general discourse, to take particular pains
 “ at this time, and at all times, with those committed
 “ to their care, or over whom they have influence, to
 “ inculcate upon them the necessity of sobriety, diligence,
 “ shunning bad company, of *doing justly, loving mercy,*
 “ *and walking humbly with God,* to whom all are to give
 “ an account.”

THE END.



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